(b) whether it is a fact that second class passengers are not given any accommodation for overnight stay at stations like Vijayawada;

(c) whether South Central Railway has noticed a lack of over-night facilities at stations;

(d) which are the worst affected stations in terms of lack of faiclities for ordinary passengers; and

(e) the steps proposed to improve facilities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No, Sir. Works relating to improvements in facilities at stations are taken up regularly wherever so warranted depending on the availability of funds.

(b) Vijayawada station is provided with 2385 sqm. of waiting area near booking office and separate waiting hall for ladies and gents on platform No. 6/7 which is used by the second class ticket holding passengers.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Basic Amenities based on importance of the stations have already been provided. There is no deficiency.

(e) Improvements to the stations is a continuous process and works in this regard are taken up at stations wherever so warranted through the annual Works Programmes of the Railways. An amount of Rs. 7.28 crore has been earmarked to South Central Railway for improving passenger amenities at stations on the Railway which includes the State of Andhra Pradesh.

Development of tourism by the Railways

2938. SHRI BHAGABAN MAJHI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Ministry of Railways has a scheme for the development of tourism;

(b) if so, what is that scheme;

(c) whether the scheme would be implemented in 1999-2000;

(d) if so, what would be the contribution of Railways in that scheme; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) to (e) Government of India is celebrating Explore India Millenium Year 1999-2000 and Ministry of Railways is initiating more and more schemes for promotion of rail based tourism.

In this context the following steps have been taken;

(1) Indian Airlines have been appointed as General Sales Agents for sale of Indrail passes through their world wide network. Similar arrangements are being negotiated with Air India.

(2) The tariff for Indrail Passes has been reduced by 10% in certain categories to attract foreign tourists.

(3) The Explore India Millenium year logo will be printed on the computerised reservation tickets for wider publicity.

(4) It is proposed to organise more trips of steam trains.

(5) Special coaches will be attached for movement of tourists on selected trains.

(6) Passenger Reservation System terminals are proposed to be provided to the travel industry.

(7) It has been decided to establish a Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation as a public sector undertaking for development of tourism infrastructure and hospitality services.

Defective Rail tracks

2939. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of rail tracks are defective which cause several accidents;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) by when these are proposed to be replaced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise. However, track renewal is a regular process and track is renewed as and when it becomes due for renewal subject to availability of funds.

Proposal for setting up IVRS in Andhra Pradesh

2940. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA-SWAMY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways propose to set up an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) for passenger information at various places in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether such a system is operating anywhere in India;

(c) what advantage would be gained by passengers due to IVRS;

(d) whether any schedule has been worked out for such a system in Andhra Pradesh; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 44 stations of Indian Railways have been provided with the facility of Interactive Voice Response System in the Country.

(c) Through Interactive Voice Response System Passengers can get current reservation status and information about arrival and departure of the trains, directly by telephone without human interference.

(d) and (e) At present Secunderabad and Vijayawada Railway stations have been provided with Interactive Voice Response System and four more stations in Andhra Pradesh have been identified for providing this facility.

MOU between C.S.I.R. and I.D.R.C Canada

2941. SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 1544 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 11th December, 1998 and state:

(a) the full text of the memorandum of grant conditions signed between Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, for the project entitled "CD Rom of Asian information on Health Environment"; and

(b) whether a society called Asian Health Environment and Allied Database (AHEAD), registered with Registrar of Societies, Delhi, is associated with the project?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) The full text of the memorandum of grant conditions signed between Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and International Development Research Centre, Canada is placed at Annexure. [*See* appendix 186, annexure no. 54]

(b) Yes Sir.

मध्य प्रदेश में एक 'बायोटेक्नोलोजीकल पार्क' की स्थापना

2942. श्री राघव जी: क्या विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि ग्रामीण प्रौद्योगिकी को प्रोत्साहित करने के लिए मध्य प्रदेश में एक "बायोटेक्नोलॉजिकल पार्क" की स्थापना संबंधी कोई योजना सरकार के विचाराधीन है; और

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है तथा इसे कब तक स्वीकृति प्रदान कर दी जायेगी?